

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-01
INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-20 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06
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FM AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3665
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USAREUR HEIDELBERG
USAFE RAMSTEIN
USCINCEUR STUTTGART

UNCLAS DUSSELDORF 1360

MIL ADDEES FOR POLADS

FOR USEEC

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, GW
SUBJECT: BARGAINING OPENED ON 35 HOUR WORK WEEK IN STEEL
INDUSTRY

REF: BONN A-202

1. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GERMAN METAL WORKERS UNION
(I.G. METALL) AND OF THE NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN(NRW)
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IRON AND STEEL INDUSTRY MET ON AUGUST 22, 1978 FOR THE
FIRST BARGAINING ROUND ON THE UNION'S DEMAND FOR REDUCING
WEEKLY WORKING TIME TO 35 HOURS WITH FULL WAGE
COMPENSATION. THE UNION HAS TERMINATED ITS COVERING
AGREEMENT (MANTEL TARIF) WHICH COVERS ABOUT 220,000 IRON
AND STEEL WORKERS IN THE RHINE-RUHR AREA, BUT HAS MADE
NO OTHER DEMAND THAN THE ABOVE WORKING TIME REDUCTION.

2. DURING THE OPENING ROUND KURT HERB, HEAD OF THE ESSEN DISTRICT, CONCEDED THAT A WORKING TIME REDUCTION WITH FULL WAGE COMPENSATION COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED STEP BY STEP; NEVERTHELESS THE UNION CONSIDERS A 35 HOURS WORK WEEK AN EFFECTIVE MEANS TO COMBAT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE INDUSTRY.

3. THE NRW EMPLOYERS CALLED THE UNION DEMANDS ECONOMICALLY UNSUPPORTABLE, ARGUING THAT A REALIZATION OF THE 35 HOUR WEEK WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO A PAY INCREASE OF 12 PER CENT, WHICH THE AILING STEEL INDUSTRY COULD NOT AFFORD. THE EMPLOYERS DOUBTED THAT WORKING TIME REDUCTIONS WOULD HAVE THE BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON THE UNEMPLOYMENT SITUATION DESIRED BY THE UNION. THEY CLAIMED THAT REDUCTIONS WOULD MORE LIKELY BE OFFSET BY INCREASED RATIONALIZATION AND OVERTIME THAN BY NEW HIRINGS. MOREOVER THE EMPLOYERS CLAIMED AN ACUTE SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOR. NEGOTIATIONS ON THE SUBJECT ARE TO BE RESUMED ON SEPTEMBER 13, 1978.

4. COMMENTS: THE UNION'S DEMAND FOR THE 35 HOURS WORK WEEK IS DOUBTLESSLY A FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PERTINENT RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE LAST CONGRESS OF THE GERMAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION IN MAY 1978. THE IRON AND STEEL EMPLOYERS, BACKED-UP BY UNCLASSIFIED

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THE EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATIONS IN OTHER INDUSTRIES, ARE DETERMINED TO RESIST THE IDEA.DUX

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NNN

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